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SUBJECT: MEDIA SUMMARY: DECEMBER 21, 2006

SUMMARY: President Musharraf's call to elect moderate and

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progressive forces rather than extremists in the next general elections dominated headlines in the Pakistani newspapers on Thursday. Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz's announcement of price reductions for various kitchen items (sugar, flour, etc), being described by papers as government's "Eid Package," was the second major story of the day. Newspapers also highlighted President Bush's reported admission that the US was not winning in Iraq. At the same time, newspapers prominently featured Al-Qaeda deputy leader Ayman al-Zawahiri's latest videotape announcing the continuation of attacks against the US. Newspapers also gave front page coverage to Foreign Minister Kasuri's meetings with Iranian officials in Tehran and the joint Pakistan-Iran call to speed up efforts on the Iran Pakistan India gas pipeline project. Several newspapers ran editorials on the Kashmir issue and the India-US civilian nuclear deal and lamented the US apathy in not offering a similar deal to Pakistan and not playing a decisive role to resolve the Kashmir issue. PAS-placed op-ed by Under Secretary Karen Hughes, on "The Diplomacy of Deeds." appeared in English daily "Statesman." End Summary.

----- News Stories -----

1. "Next Polls Critical To Country' Future, Says Musharraf" "The News" (cir. 55,000) (12/21)

"President Musharraf has said the coming general elections in 2007 would be of crucial importance to send out a message to the outside world whether Pakistan wanted moderate and progressive forces in power or the extremists. While addressing the 5th annual convocation of the Government College University, Lahore on Wednesday questioned if the country could afford the same environment what was being promoted in Bajaur and other tribal areas earlier."

2. "USC Told To Cut Essential Items Prices By 10-12pc" "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (12/21)

"Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz on Wednesday announced that sugar, flour and grams would be sold at the utility stores at 10 to 12 per cent lower prices than those in the open market under an Eidul Azha package."

3. "Bush: Iraq Insurgents Hurt US Efforts" "Pakistan Observer" (cir. 5,000) (12/21)

"Summing up a year of setbacks, President Bush conceded on Wednesday that insurgents in Iraq thwarted US efforts at "establishing security and stability throughout the country."

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4. "We're Not Winning In Iraq: Bush" "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (12/21)

"President George W. Bush conceded for the first time on Wednesday that the United States was not winning the war in Iraq and called for an increase in the size of the US military, particularly the Army and Marines."

5. "Anti-Iran Resolution To Harm Muslim World: Kasuri" "Pakistan Observer" (cir. 5,000) (12/21)

"Tehran-Pakistani Foreign Minister Khurshid Kasuri said on Wednesday that any anti-Iran resolution by the United Nations against Iranian nuclear program is detrimental to the entire region and the Muslim World."

6. "Pakistan, Iran To Speed Up Efforts On IPI Project" "The Post" (cir. 5,000) (12/21)

"Pakistan and Iran on Wednesday agreed to accelerate efforts to finalize the Iran-Pakistan-India (IPI) Gas Pipeline Project and coordinate activities for the reconstruction in Afghanistan. Foreign Minister Khurshid Mehmood Kasuri held formal talks with his Iranian counterpart Manouchehr Mottaki Wednesday."

7. "Religious Groups Can't be Excluded From Political Process: Cohen" "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (12/21)

"Army is not trained to run a modern country and people have the right to choose their governing body, this was a reply of Stephen P. Cohen to a question regarding the army's role in state affairs. the world-renowned scholar Cohen was delivering a lecture in a group discussion organized by Indus Civilization Study Group in Islamabad on Wednesday."

8. "Transparent Polls Pakistan's Internal Matter: US" "The Post" (cir. 5,000) (12/21)

"Although free and fair polls is an internal matter of Pakistan, the international community expects the forthcoming elections will be transparent, said Bryan D Hunt, principal officer at the United States Consulate. He was addressing a seminar titled 'Free and Fair Polls' organized by Tehreek-e-Istaqlal (TI) on Wednesday in Lahore."

9. "US Setting Up LDI Office To Train Pak MPs" "The News" (cir. 55,000) (12/21)

"The United States of American is planned to establish Legislative Development Institute (LDI) in Pakistan. The USAID has conceived the

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Pakistan Legislative Development Program. The US government will provide funds for this project."

10. "Govt. Told To Explain Handover Of Man To US" "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (12/21)

"A local court asked the government on Wednesday to explain why a Pakistani citizen, suspected of having links with Al Qaeda, had been handed over to the United States, a lawyer said. The suspect, Majid Khan, was arrested in Karachi in March 2003 and later sent to the US military prison in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba."

Editorials/Opinions

11. "American Lack of Interest in Kashmir" an editorial note in the center-right nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-e-Waqt" (12/21)

"American expert on South Asia, Stephen Cohen has said that America neither has any interest in the resolution of the Kashmir dispute nor has it taken any step in this respect. This situation is very precarious, as the United States is expressing its indifference on Kashmir dispute by disregarding the UN resolutions. And virtually it (U.S.) wants Pakistan to make decision in favor of India. To serve this purpose, President Musharraf has liberally offered Kashmir to India unilaterally."

12. "Kashmir issue - India's Acknowledgment Of Reality For The First Time" an editorial in the leading mass circulation centrist Urdu daily, "Jang" (cir. 300,000) (12/21)

"Undoubtedly, desire for an early solution of Kashmir dispute is praiseworthy. However, whatever are the decisions and outcomes will have serious affect on the lives of people of Pakistan, India and Kashmir. So, the solution must be principled and acceptable to all the three parties of this dispute. India should avail this opportunity to lay foundation for peace and prosperity in the region."

13. "Indian Hegemonic Designs And American Pat On The Back," editorial in the center-right Urdu daily "Pakistan" (cir. 10,000) (12/21)

"U.S. Under Secretary for Political Affairs Nicholas Burns has said that Pakistan does not have a clean record vis-a-vis nuclear proliferation, which is why America will not agree to have India like civilian nuclear deal with it. If America takes Pakistan as an ally and partner in the war against terrorism then it should help

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resolve the problems Pakistan is facing instead of creating more problems for it."

14. "U.S. Refusal To Sign Nuclear Treaty With Pakistan" an editorial in the Karachi-based, pro-Taliban Jihadi Urdu daily, "Islam" (cir. 15,000) (12/21)

"Our government should make it clear to Bush Administration who is constantly ignoring Pakistan, that if the U.S. continues to treat us discriminately, Pakistan can review its relations with the U.S., and can cease cooperation in 'war on terrorism.'"

15. "U.S. New Priorities With Reference To India" an editorial in Peshawar-based Urdu daily, "Mashriq" (55,000) (12/21)

"The U.S. and India are planning a new game in this part of the world, and Pakistan does not perceive any role in this plan. If Pakistan cannot take u-turn on its policy with reference to the United States, at least we should not build castles in the air, instead should devise policies that would not diminish our significance even after the solution of Afghanistan, Al-Qaeda and Taliban problems."

16. "Get Out Of Iraq," an editorial in the Lahore-based liberal English daily, "The Post" (cir. 5,000) (12/21)

"The new US Secretary of State for Defence Robert Gates' speech when he took oath of office on Monday was full of positive intentions for his nation regarding the situation in Iraq and Afghanistan. All the consequences of the Iraq invasion are becoming apparent. All indicators points towards the fact that the state of affairs in Iraq has become unsalvageable. What is really disturbing is that the Bush administration is still reluctant to take cognizance of the ground realities and continues to harbor unrealistic hopes and desires."

17. "Pakistan-Iran Trade Ties," an editorial in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily, "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (12/21)

"The opening up now seen on the part of the two neighbors in the trade and energy sectors can make a good new beginning for expansion in bilateral ties. Here is an opportunity to grab, with China, Central Asian republics and Russia becoming stakeholders in Pakistan-Iran trade relations; a stable Afghanistan can later join the trading block as a natural partner. The opportunity should be seized immediately, without waiting for a tripartite gas pipeline deal."

18. "Iranian Offer For Trade Corridor," editorial note in the liberal Urdu daily "Express" (cir. 25,000) (12/21)

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"The need is to give a positive response to the Iranian offer of trade corridor so that Pakistan's trade activity can increase. By accepting this Iranian offer, Pakistan can gain access to Central Asian resources too. Pakistan should give serious consideration to this offer."

19. "Iran's Nuclear Program," editorial note in the Lahore-based populist center-right Urdu daily "Khabrain" (cir. 50,000) (12/21)

"Acquiring new technology is every country's right, not solely of U.S. or Western countries. American threats against Iran bring to light the fact that the U.S. opposes progress of Muslim states. This is also borne out by the U.S.-India civil nuclear deal." Crocker

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